United Nations E/AC.51/2008/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 April 2008

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-eighth session
9 June-3 July 2008
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Programme questions: evaluation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs: field special political missions led by the Department of Political Affairs but supported by the Department of Field Support

Summary

The present report is the final in the series of Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) reports on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs, requested by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-fourth session in 2005. It covers field special political missions led by the Department of Political Affairs but supported by the Department of Field Support.

The evaluation examined the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of 10 field special political missions and their activities. OIOS found that stakeholders generally acknowledge that special political missions play an important role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. However, it is difficult to ascertain the relative contribution that the missions make to their mandates or areas of activity. OIOS considers that greater efforts in performance measurement and evaluation will allow for more informed assessments of the contributions that the missions make, including whether their activities are relevant and whether they are having the desired impact.

OIOS found that overall management of special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs needed improvement. Strategic planning in relation to the missions was insufficient, with a need for the Department to define the role of the missions in the peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts of the United Nations and to better coordinate the activities of special political missions as a whole with those of other relevant actors within the United Nations system.

* E/AC.51/2008/1.

08-30506 (E) 210508

OIOS also found that administrative support to special political missions was at times not appropriately tailored to the needs of the missions, and that untimely and inflexible support had hindered the work of the missions and their ability to achieve their mandates.

OIOS makes four recommendations aimed at enhancing the contribution that special political missions make to peacebuilding and conflict prevention and at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of support to special political missions. OIOS recommends that the Department of Political Affairs, working with other relevant Secretariat departments and the Secretary-General, undertake the following:

- Develop clear guidelines that define special political missions, their role in the peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts of the United Nations and the respective responsibilities of relevant United Nations Secretariat departments with respect to leadership and support to special political missions (recommendation 1, paragraph 55)
- Improve initial strategic planning, preparation and deployment of special political missions by ensuring that a clear mission strategy is developed for each mission (recommendation 2, paragraph 56)
- Agree and prepare with the Department of Field Support terms of reference or guidelines that formalize and improve cooperation and coordination in special political mission planning and support and that outline the respective roles, responsibilities and standards for interaction between the departments to ensure that mission resources and support are better tailored to mission circumstances and need (recommendation 3, paragraph 57)
- Develop appropriate mechanisms for stronger overall management of the Department of Political Affairs, coordination and oversight of special political missions, including the establishment of policies or processes within the Department for more formalized coordination and knowledge-sharing in special political mission planning and support, as well as clarification of overall responsibility and accountability within the Department for special political mission performance and results (recommendation 4, paragraphs 58 to 59)

All relevant departments agreed or agreed in principle with the recommendations.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–4	4
II.	Methodology	5–7	4
III.	Background	8–11	6
IV.	Evaluation findings	12–52	10
	A. Stakeholders generally believe that special political missions contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention	12–19	10
	B. The role of special political missions, their part in the peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts of the United Nations and their partnerships with other parts of the United Nations system are ill-defined	20–25	13
	C. Strategic planning and budgeting for special political missions are inadequate	26–38	15
	D. Despite recent improvements, insufficient substantive and administrative support remains a key impediment to mission performance	39–52	21
V.	Conclusion	53–54	27
VI.	Recommendations	55–59	27
Annexes			
I.	Abbreviations of field special political missions included in the report		29
II.	Growth in budget and staffing of field special political missions over the last 10 years		30

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-fourth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination requested that the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) undertake an in-depth evaluation of political affairs.[1] The political affairs programme (programme 2 of the United Nations biennial programme plan for the period 2008-2009) is implemented by the Department of Political Affairs.

2. Owing to the large scope of the political affairs programme, OIOS undertook the in-depth evaluation of political affairs in a phased manner. OIOS has already presented six evaluation reports covering various political affairs subprogrammes, including a summary report of the evaluation work to date.[2]

3. The present report is the final report in the series of OIOS reports on its in-depth evaluation of political affairs and covers the field special political missions that are led by the Department of Political Affairs and administered by the Department of Field Support.[3] A draft of the report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and their comments have been taken into consideration in the finalization of the report. Where relevant, departmental comments have also been included.

4. The purpose of the present in-depth evaluation is to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of aspects of 10 field special political missions and their activities. The evaluation examined the following:

- The relevance of the activities of the 10 field special political missions and their impact
- The enabling environment for the work of the missions, including the management and support provided to special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support
- The processes in place for monitoring and assessing performance

II. Methodology

5. In conducting the evaluation, the Office of Internal Oversight Services used a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. The evaluation findings are based on the following nine data sources:

(a) A self-administered, Internet-based survey of mission staff at 10 field special political missions;[4]

---

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/59/16), para. 382, and General Assembly resolution 59/275, para. 22.

[2] Reports have been presented to the Committee on all five subprogrammes of work (E/AC.51/2006/4 and E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1-2, and Add.3 and Corr.1), and on special political missions that are both managed and administratively supported by the Department of Political Affairs (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.4). A summary report of the findings of the earlier five reports has also been presented (E/AC.51/2007/2).

[3] Prior to the establishment of the Department of Field Support in 2007, the field special political missions were supported by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

[4] The survey was conducted from November 2007 to December 2007. Out of 632 special political mission staff members surveyed, 182 responded, for a response rate of 29 per cent.

(b) A self-administered survey of United Nations Headquarters-based desk officers who liaise with special political missions on behalf of the Department of Political Affairs;[5]

(c) Twenty-two interviews with Department staff, including all eight desk officers;

(d) A total of 11 interviews with current or former Special Representatives of the Secretary-General;

(e) Twenty-one interviews with United Nations special political mission partners;[6]

(f) Field visits to four special political missions, during which a total of 97 interviews were conducted with mission staff, United Nations system partners, local authorities and representatives of non-United Nations entities;[7]

(g) Eleven interviews with representatives of permanent missions to the United Nations;

(h) A review of relevant literature, including previous internal and external audits, assessments and reports;

(i) A review of other relevant internal Departmental and special political mission documents related to the planning, establishment and monitoring of special political missions.

6. In conducting the evaluation and preparing the evaluation report, OIOS also took into account the findings of prior OIOS evaluations and of the audit work of the Department and special political missions led by the Department.[8]

7. OIOS recognizes several limitations to the evaluation methodology. Budget, time and security constraints meant that it was possible to conduct field visits to only 4 of the 10 missions within the evaluation, and therefore not all possible stakeholders were able to contribute to the evaluation.[9] OIOS further acknowledges that the absence of quantitative benchmarks and other internal performance information on which OIOS could base a comprehensive assessment of impact also limited the conclusions that could be drawn, particularly with respect to assessments of the impact of special political missions in conflict prevention and peacebuilding

[5] The survey was conducted from November 2007 to December 2007. Out of eight desk officers surveyed, six responded, for a response rate of 75 per cent.

[6] Interviews were held with officials of the Department of Field Support, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other United Nations entities.

[7] Field visits were made to the following four special political missions: the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the International Independent Investigation Commission and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

[8] The OIOS evaluations and audits included recent audits of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission.

[9] Throughout the present report, the term "stakeholder" is used to refer to all those interviewed or surveyed that have an interest in the work of special political missions, including mission and other Department of Political Affairs staff, Member States, local government authorities and United Nations partners.

work. The methodology is further limited by a low response rate for the special political mission field staff survey.

III. Background

Special political missions

8. Special political missions are established by the General Assembly or the Security Council, or on the personal initiative of the Secretary-General to help prevent and resolve conflict or to build lasting peace in nations emerging from civil wars (see E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.4, para. 7). Special political missions provide a platform for political analysis and preventive diplomacy to assist in the prevention and resolution of conflict. In total, 26 special political missions are identified in the programme budget for 2008-2009 (see A/62/512, para. 3).

9. To facilitate consideration of special political missions in the programme budget, the Department of Political Affairs has grouped the current 26 missions into three thematic clusters, broadly classified according to the respective roles, functions and nature of the missions.[10] OIOS has previously examined the special political missions of clusters I and II for which the Department of Political Affairs is responsible for providing management direction as well as logistical and administrative support (see E/AC.51/2007/4/Add.4). The present evaluation examines the remaining thematic cluster III field special political missions led by the Department of Political Affairs but for which administrative and logistical support is provided by the Department of Field Support.

10. There are 12 special political missions within thematic cluster III, and the Department of Political Affairs is responsible for providing substantive management direction to nine of the missions (see table).[11] The evaluation examined eight of the nine Department-led cluster III special political missions.[12] Also included within the scope of the evaluation were the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator

[10] A/62/512, table 1. Thematic cluster I includes special representatives and personal envoys, special advisers and personal representatives of the Secretary-General. Thematic cluster II includes sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels. Thematic cluster III includes United Nations peacebuilding support offices, integrated offices and commissions.

[11] The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is responsible for providing management direction to the remaining three missions: the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) and the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). The Department of Political Affairs advised OIOS that there are plans to shift responsibility for management and direction of UNIOSIL to the Department sometime over the course of 2008.

[12] The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia was not included in the evaluation since it formally commenced operation on 1 January 2008, subsequent to the finalization of data collection for the evaluation.

for the Middle East Peace Process.[13] Therefore, as shown in figure I, the evaluation examined the 10 missions led by DPA that had a field presence, comprising eight Department-led special political missions falling within thematic cluster III, as well as the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

Table
Special political missions listed in the programme budget for 2008-2009

Special political mission	*Led by*	*Supported by*
Thematic cluster III. United Nations offices, peacebuilding support offices, integrated offices and commissions		
1. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa (UNOWA)	DPA	DFS
2. United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA)	DPA	DFS
3. United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS)	DPA	DFS
4. United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)	DPA	DFS
5. United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL)	DPKO	DFS
6. Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC)	DPA	DFS
7. International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIIC)	DPA	DFS
8. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)	DPA	DFS
9. United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB)	DPKO	DFS
10. United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN)	DPA	DFS
11. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)	DPKO	DFS
12. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)	DPA	DFS

Source: A/62/512.
Note: DPA = Department of Political Affairs; DPKO = Department of Peacekeeping Operations; and DFS = Department of Field Support.

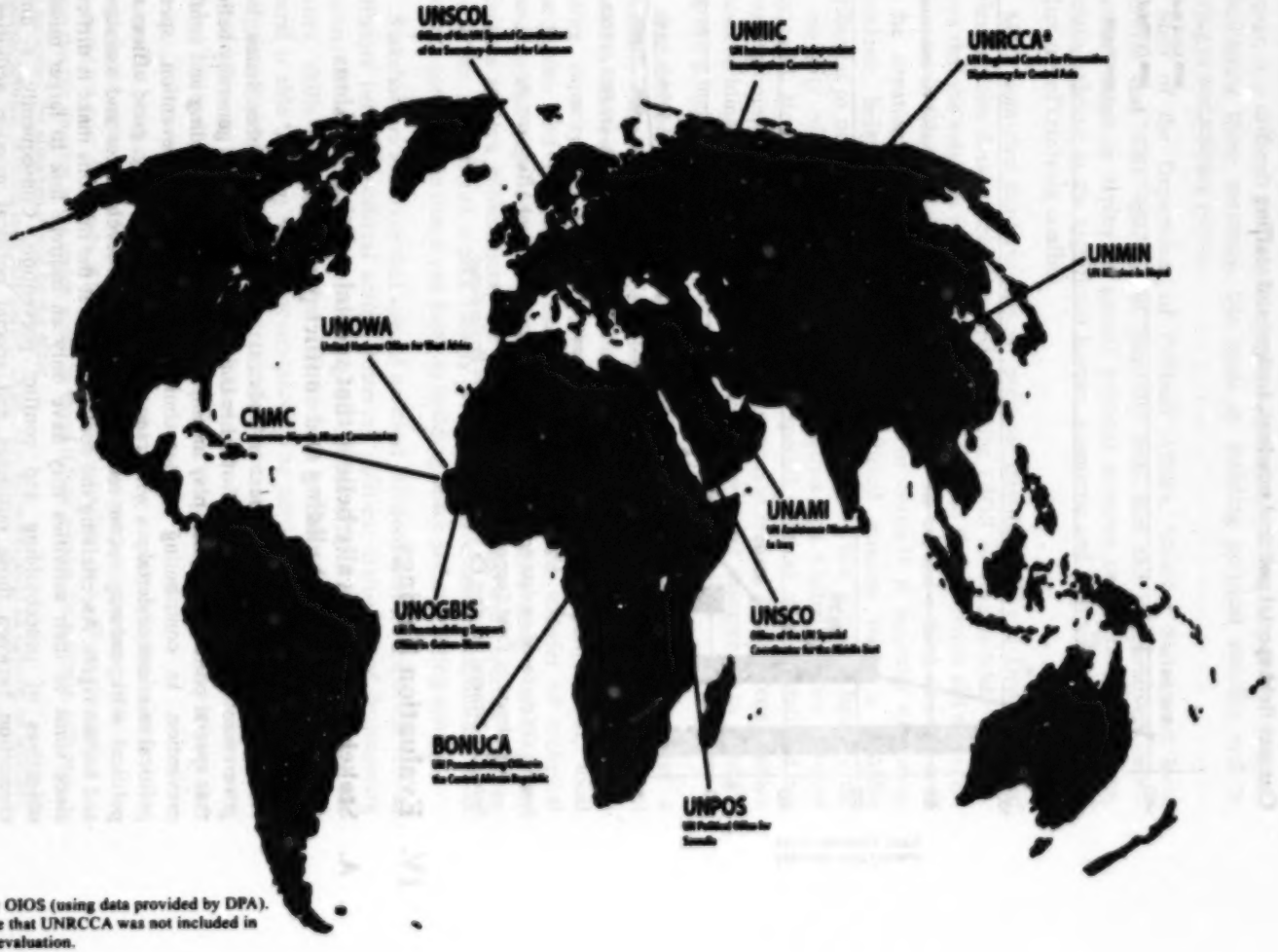
[13] Although it is not formally designated a special political mission, the evaluation included the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process since that mission is similar to the other cluster III special political missions in that it is a Department of Political Affairs-led political mission with a field presence that relies on the Department of Field Support for administrative and logistical support. It was for that reason that the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon was also included within the scope of the evaluation, even though the Office is designated by the Department of Political Affairs as falling within thematic cluster I. Throughout the remainder of the report, unless otherwise stated, a reference to special political missions is a reference to the field missions led by the Department of Political Affairs but supported by the Department of Field Support.

11. Rapid growth has occurred in the number and budget of field special political missions over the last 10 years, with a slight decline for the 2008-2009 biennium (see annex II). In 2008, the total budget across the 10 missions examined in the evaluation (as well as the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia) was $283.8 million, with total staff of 2,231 (see figure II).[14] The median mission budget for Department of Political Affairs-led missions in 2008 is $7.2 million.[15]

[14] The budget for 2008-2009 is still in draft form and has yet to be reviewed and approved by the General Assembly, so may be subject to revision.

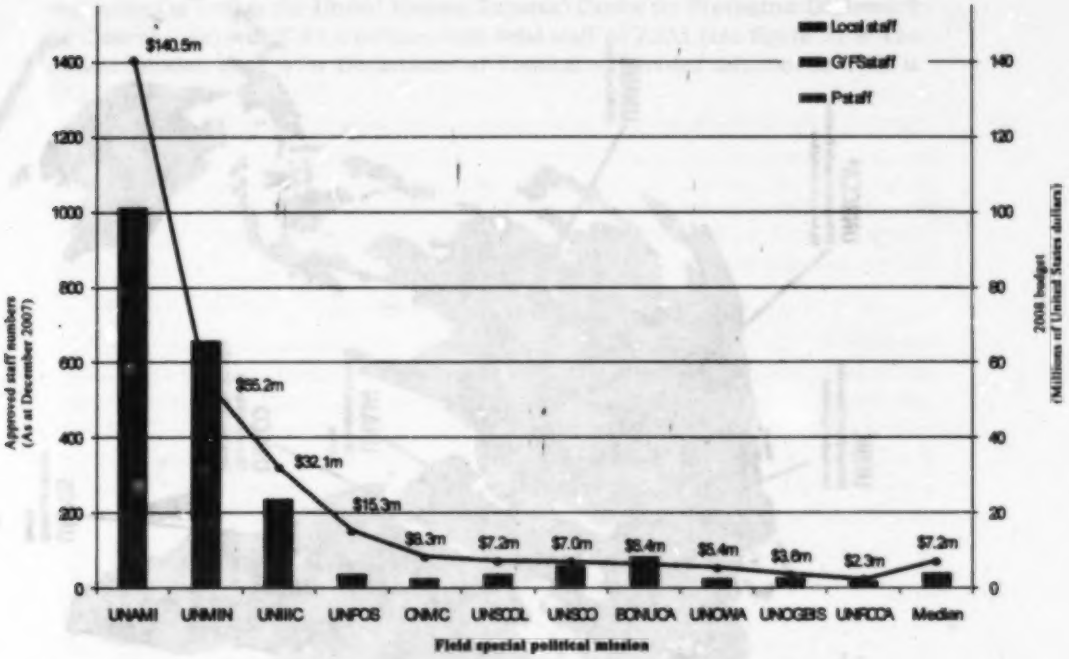
[15] The median is found by arranging the budgets in order of decreasing size and then selecting the value that lies in the middle. The median more accurately represents the distribution of budgets across the special political missions, since the number of missions that have a budget larger than the median is the same as the number with a budget less than the median. This compares with the average (arithmetic mean) mission budget of $25.7 million, which, owing to the influence of the large size of the budgets for UNAMI and UNAMA compared with the other mission budgets, does not accurately depict the actual distribution of budget sizes across the special political missions.

Figure I
Field special political missions led by DPA



Source: OIOS (using data provided by DPA).
* Note that UNRCCA was not included in the evaluation.

Figure II
Current field special political missions, budget and staffing



Source: OIOS (based on data provided by the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support).
Note: G = General Service; FS = Field Service; P = Professional.

IV. Evaluation findings

A. Stakeholders generally believe that special political missions contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention

12. Mission and the Department of Political Affairs staff, Member States, local government authorities and staff of other United Nations partners generally believe that special political missions play an important role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. In contributing to peacebuilding and conflict prevention, special political missions undertake a wide range of activities, including: good offices and political work; security sector reform; humanitarian development and assistance; and human rights. Ascertaining the contribution that the missions make is difficult, since some of their activities may have only an indirect link to larger mission objectives of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Consequently, a direct connection between those outcomes and special political mission activities is difficult to establish. Some activities can be more easily linked to peacebuilding and conflict prevention outcomes than others. For example, holding meetings between political parties can facilitate dialogue, which in turn can help create the conditions

necessary for building political stability and restoring or maintaining peace. However, it is difficult to quantify the contribution that a special political mission, in facilitating those meetings, has made to building political stability and to restoring or maintaining peace.

13. Staff of the Department of Political Affairs, Member States and local authorities that were interviewed generally note that the comparatively small investment made in deploying special political missions can yield large returns, especially relative to the significant human, economic and environmental costs of conflict and of resolving conflict.

14. More than two thirds of special political mission staff and Department of Political Affairs desk officers responding to the OIOS surveys indicate that they believe that the situation in the region would be worse if the mission did not exist. Of concern to OIOS, however, was the response from around a third who believed that the situation would be about the same or better.[16] A majority of survey respondents believed that their special political mission made a valuable contribution to peacebuilding or conflict prevention, a view similarly held by the vast majority of Member States, local authorities and United Nations partners interviewed. However, nearly one third of special political mission staff did not express an opinion when asked whether their mission made a valuable contribution to peacebuilding or conflict prevention, with 8 per cent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that their mission made a valuable contribution.[17]

15. Stakeholders frequently note that special political missions can play a particularly valuable role in building local capacity. In particular, a number of local authorities acknowledged the contribution that the relevant mission had made to building capacity in, and transferring knowledge and experience to, local organizations and institutions. Examples given included transfer of technical knowledge and experience in electoral processes, legislative design, investigative techniques and law enforcement. The transfer of knowledge and expertise that can occur when the mission works closely with local government institutions is an important contribution that it can bring to building peace and preventing conflict.

16. Stakeholders also note that special political missions play an important role as facilitators between political actors, fostering political dialogue and maintaining communication. The success of those good offices efforts depends highly on the abilities, skills and expertise that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is able to bring to the circumstances. The need for the right team with the appropriate combination of skills and experience required to support the Special Representative in his or her work was raised frequently throughout interviews with Member States and other stakeholders. OIOS has previously noted that a robust and

[16] Of the special political mission staff responding to the survey, 64 per cent believe that the situation in the region would be worse, 33 per cent the same and 2 per cent better, if their mission did not exist. Two thirds of Department of Political Affairs desk officers responding believe that the situation in the region would be worse if their mission did not exist, with one third believing the situation would be the same.

[17] Of special political mission staff responding, 29 per cent did not express an opinion on whether they believed that their mission made a valuable contribution to peacebuilding or conflict prevention. Eight per cent of mission staff responding disagreed or strongly disagreed that their mission made a valuable contribution. All Department of Political Affairs desk officers agreed or strongly agreed that their special political mission made a valuable contribution to peacebuilding or conflict prevention.

transparent process of recruitment is necessary to support the appointment of the right representatives for the task (see E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.4, para. 46). *The Department of Field Support stated that in some instances it has requested the assistance of the Department of Political Affairs in building the Department of Field Support rosters of suitably qualified candidates and has recently introduced mechanisms to improve the quality of the roster.*[18]

17. While Member States and other stakeholders generally view special political missions as performing well in their respective areas of activity, they note that it is not always easy to gauge whether the missions are effectively implementing their mandates. That difficulty is compounded by the lack of systematic performance information and the minimal amount of prior impact evaluation of the work of the missions (see also paras. 36-38). Although most of the missions report success in their discrete activities (and two missions were successfully concluded in 2007), overall objectives may not have been completely achieved.[19]

18. Survey and interview data show that the influence and success of special political missions is often highly dependent on external factors over which the missions may not have much control. The influence of external factors also makes direct attribution of mission activities to overall mandate achievement challenging. Some mission activities are more influenced by external factors than others. For example, OIOS noted several situations where the mediation and good offices efforts of special political missions were particularly challenging, being especially affected by the external political environment within which the mission was operating. A majority of mission staff and Department of Political Affairs desk officers who responded to the survey believe that external factors have a more than moderate influence on the performance of their mission. Very few believe that external factors have only a slight or no influence on mission performance. For example, rapidly changing political circumstances and a fluid security environment have often significantly affected the ability of the missions to undertake their activities as planned.

19. In the difficult and highly complex arena within which special political missions operate, it is not surprising that the contribution that they make is heavily dependent on external factors. However, the influence of external factors makes adequate preparation, planning and timely support critical to the ability of the missions to carry out their mandates. Given the missions' strong dependence on external factors not under their control, OIOS considers that special political missions must be responsive to changing circumstances, and that requires that they be strategically deployed, well-managed, appropriately equipped and provided with appropriate resources. As is explained below, OIOS found a number of areas where management and support to special political missions require improvement.

---

[18] The rosters of qualified and available candidates for missions are built using open and generic vacancy announcements which accumulate applicants over a period up to one year. Applicants are vetted, their references are checked and then they are given a preliminary interview to determine their mission preference. All missions are encouraged to fill positions in all occupational groups with candidates from the roster.

[19] The two missions that concluded in 2007 were the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding (UNTOP) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

B. The role of special political missions, their part in the peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts of the United Nations and their partnerships with other parts of the United Nations system are ill-defined

Defining the role of special political missions in peacebuilding and conflict prevention

20. Many mission and Department of Political Affairs staff, United Nations partners and Member States interviewed also comment that there needs to be better definition and agreement within the United Nations on the role that special political missions will play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and how the missions fit with the Department (including with its other conflict prevention activities) and other relevant United Nations actors.[20]

21. During interviews, Member States and United Nations partners noted a need for more coherence in the overall work of special political missions and a clearly defined vision of the role that the missions should play in the activities of the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations. That role is hampered by uncertainties surrounding the definition and designation of special political missions and the relationship that the missions have to other parts of the United Nations system. Despite recent efforts by the Department to clearly designate those missions for which it is responsible, OIOS notes inconsistencies and uncertainties in the use of the term "special political mission" by the Department of Political Affairs and others, as well as in the designation and classification of the missions, and those inconsistencies and uncertainties continue to hinder assessment of responsibility and accountability for the direction and management of the missions. It is not obvious why some missions are classified as special political missions or why they have been assigned to particular thematic clusters.[21] Nor is it always clear why an alternative department has been designated as the lead agency for a particular mission. For example, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is responsible for three missions with political or peacebuilding functions. Given the Department of Political Affairs mandate as the focal point within the United Nations for post-conflict peacebuilding and its responsibility for directing and managing special political missions, as well as the inconsistencies concerning the designation and classification of the missions, there is a need for the Department of Political Affairs to ensure that it more clearly defines all those missions termed special political missions and identifies why each mission has been grouped within a particular cluster.

22. In addition, the Department of Political Affairs lists 11 field missions on its Internet site as political and peacebuilding missions (with eight of them described as being led by that Department).[22] Included in the Department of Political Affairs list of 11 missions are the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

---

[20] The issue was identified in earlier OIOS audit and evaluation reports on special political missions: see A/61/357, paras. 16-25; and E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.4, para. 7.

[21] For example, one of the special political missions included in the evaluation, the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, may be better classified within cluster III since, like other cluster III missions, it has a field presence in the performance of its peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities (see also para. 10).

[22] The list is available from http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/ppbm.pdf.

(which the programme budget groups as a cluster I special political mission) and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (which is not classified within the programme budget as a special political mission). However, three of the field special political missions do not appear on the Department's Internet list, even though they are classified as cluster III special political missions in the programme budget.[23]

23. OIOS also notes that it is not clear how the activities of some special political missions relate to the activities of other United Nations actors or even to some other activities of the Department of Political Affairs itself. Many interviewees noted that insufficient strategic attention had been paid to that question. In its field visits to four special political missions, OIOS observed that there was not a clear understanding among the various United Nations actors of the precise relationship between their work and that of the mission. Uncertainties have arisen over the role that the mission should play in relation to the work of other parts of the United Nations system. In addition, there is frequently a lack of clarity in governance, accountability and reporting relationships between Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and other parts of the United Nations system. For example, the mandate and work of special political missions sometimes overlap those of other United Nations agencies within a country (human rights and governance promotion are two such areas). The expected working relationships between the special political mission and the other United Nations actors in areas of overlap or common interest is not always satisfactorily resolved. A common issue raised during interviews was the need to better define the relationship between the special political mission and the United Nations country team, especially between the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.[24] Additional uncertainties exist in the reporting relationship between Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and the Department of Political Affairs and between Special Representatives and the Secretary-General. Interviewees note that when the reporting relationships are unclear, it is more difficult to ensure that the activities and good offices work of the United Nations are consistent, effective and supported by the Organization's other activities.

24. Stakeholders recognize that there is a need to carefully balance the political activities undertaken by special political missions and other United Nations roles and activities. However, they hold divergent views on the ideal role that the Missions should play with respect to other United Nations actors working within a country or region and to the governance and management and reporting relationships that should be in place. Some believe that there is a place for stronger leadership by special political missions and the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the work of the United Nations. Others disagree, seeing the work of United Nations country teams as distinct from that of special political

[23] The missions not listed are the United Nations Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, the International Independent Investigation Commission and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

[24] The United Nations country team comprises representatives of United Nations entities represented in a particular country. The country team attempts to formulate common objectives and strategies for the United Nations and to ensure that activities of the United Nations in a country are appropriately coordinated. The Resident Coordinator leads the country team in promoting a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to United Nations activities within a country.

missions (especially the missions' political and good offices work) and thus not appropriate for coordination by Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. Nevertheless, they agree that all United Nations actors must work in cooperation or at least coordination with each other, especially to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the United Nations as a whole.

25. OIOS notes that the Secretary-General's recent proposals to reorganize the Department of Political Affairs and to increase its field presence through the use of regional offices (to be established as new special political missions) provides an opportunity that should be taken by the Department to clarify the role that the missions should play within the United Nations and their relationship with other United Nations actors.[25] OIOS agrees with the views of many stakeholders that there is little room for a one-size-fits all approach to coordination and cooperation between special political missions and other United Nations actors. The nature and degree of coordination, as well as the structures and mechanisms for achieving it, will depend upon the circumstances. For example, important considerations include the type of presence the United Nations has in the country, the number of other United Nations actors and the nature of their work compared with the work of the mission. However, it is critical that this relationship is clarified and better defined, to ensure that the ideals of coordination and cooperation embodied in the vision of "One United Nations" are realized.[26] OIOS considers it important that sufficient attention be paid to clarifying the place of special political missions in the peacebuilding and conflict prevention work of the United Nations.

C. Strategic planning and budgeting for special political missions are inadequate

Strategic planning for individual missions

26. Interview and survey data strongly indicate that planning for individual missions is inadequate and missions are not deployed in a timely way. Special political missions are often required to be deployed rapidly, in response to sometimes urgent need. This means that at times there is little opportunity or there are few resources available to plan a mission to the desired depth, either prior to or during its deployment, making existing United Nations processes for strategic planning less useful. Many interviewees note that a more formalized approach to work planning and strategic planning is needed, both at the individual mission level and at the higher Department of Political Affairs or organization-wide level. Although mission strategic planning and the processes employed for the deployment of new missions are reported by mission staff and the Department to have improved recently, stakeholders note that there is not a clear mission strategy for each special political mission that relates its activities to its mandate and that planning is too focused on short-term needs and time horizons.

[25] See the revised estimates relating to the proposed strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs (A/62/521 and Corr.1).

[26] See A/61/583; and United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, "One United Nations — catalyst for progress and change: how the Millennium Declaration is changing the way the United Nations system works" (New York, 2005).

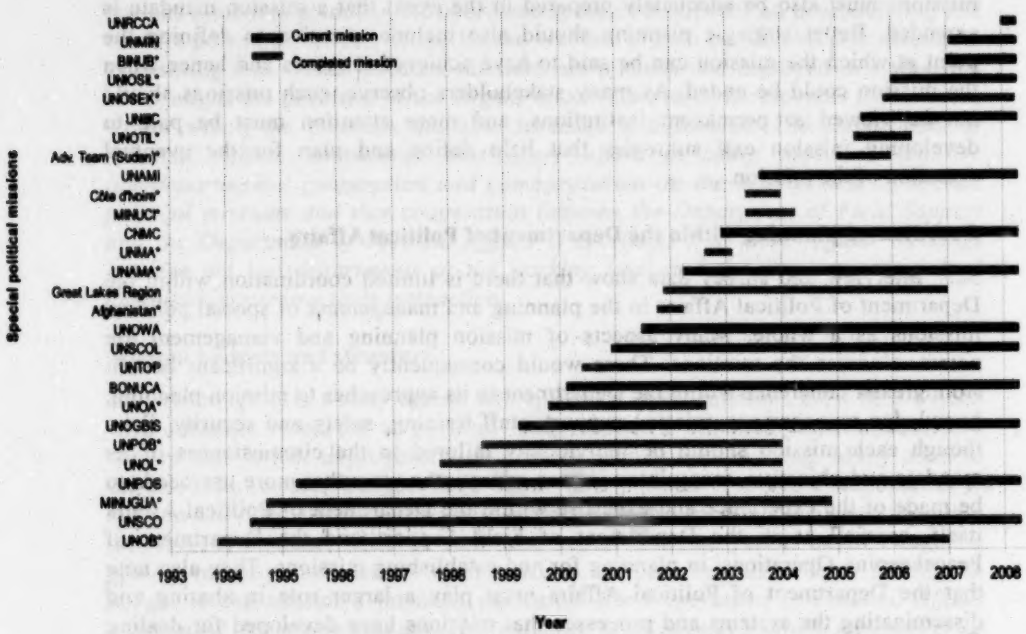
27. The Department of Political Affairs reports that detailed mission workplans have not been developed for one third of the special political missions. OIOS reviewed workplans for half of the missions and found that even where workplans had been prepared, it was still not clearly described how the activities of the mission would contribute to implementing the mission mandate. OIOS also found that there is a need to define more clearly the intended role of each mission, and the ways in which, through its activities, it will implement its mandate. Many of those interviewed expressed similar views of mission workplans.

28. OIOS notes that the preparation of formal mission workplans helps to ensure that sufficient early attention is paid to clearly defining the expected activities of the special political mission and the linkages between those activities and the overall objectives and mandates of the mission. The nature of the missions' work and the methods through which they contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention mean that a flexible and pragmatic approach must be taken to mission strategic planning. Nevertheless, OIOS considers that it is important (a) to develop clear mission strategies that outline the expected activities of the mission and the ways in which those activities will contribute to the achievement of the mission mandate; and (b) a plan for measuring mission performance.

29. OIOS also observes that the limited duration of special political mission mandates can make adequate strategic planning and the development of systems for efficient and effective mission functioning difficult. Many of the special political mission mandates are initially for periods of one year or less, which contributes to a focus within the Department of Political Affairs and the mission on short-term planning horizons. In fact, missions are often required to begin liquidation planning from an early point in the mandate cycle, preparing for the possibility that the mission will not extend beyond the current mandate. However, as figure III shows, the average mission duration over the last decade is 6.5 years, with mission mandates usually being extended or renewed multiple times.[27] The reality of extended mission mandates means that longer-term strategic planning is crucial for special political missions.

[27] This figure is calculated across all Department of Political Affairs-led field special political missions over the last decade.

Figure III
Field special political missions, year of commencement and duration, 1994-present



Source: OIOS (based on data provided by the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support).

Notes: Missions marked with an asterisk are led by an entity other than the Department of Political Affairs.
See annex I for a list of abbreviations.
Countries and regions for which special political missions are represented: Afghanistan: Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan; Côte d'Ivoire: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire; the Sudan: United Nations Advance Team in the Sudan; and Great Lakes Region: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

30. During its field visits, OIOS observed other examples where inadequate medium-term planning had resulted in poorly developed internal management and administrative systems within the mission. In one of the missions OIOS visited, failure to develop document management systems at the start of the mission had meant that substantial resources had to be devoted later on to consolidating records and information to uncover information in the possession of the mission, but not readily accessible. Some of that effort could have been avoided had better systems for document and knowledge management been anticipated and in place from the start. Poorly developed internal systems can affect the functioning of special political missions, resulting in inefficiencies and compromised mission effectiveness. Insufficient planning horizons also limit the development of appropriate systems for staff training and development (see paragraph 42).

31. Given the average mission duration of 6.5 years, OIOS notes that closer attention must be paid to potential medium-term mission requirements. While the Secretariat must always remain mindful of the prerogative of Member States to determine and set limits on the duration of mission mandates, special political missions must also be adequately prepared in the event that a mission mandate is extended. Better strategic planning should also include attention to defining the point at which the mission can be said to have achieved its goals and hence when the mission could be ended. As many stakeholders observe, such missions should not be viewed as permanent institutions, and more attention must be paid to developing mission exit strategies that help define and plan for the eventual cessation of the mission.

Coordinated planning within the Department of Political Affairs

32. Interview and survey data show that there is limited coordination within the Department of Political Affairs in the planning and management of special political missions as a whole. Many aspects of mission planning and management are common across the missions. There would consequently be a significant benefit from greater coherence within the Department in its approaches to mission planning, knowledge management, mission support, staff training, safety and security. Even though each mission should be individually tailored to the circumstances of its mandate and objective, many interviewees express the view that more use needs to be made of the experience and expertise within the Department of Political Affairs itself, as well as in the Department of Field Support and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in planning for and establishing missions. They also note that the Department of Political Affairs must play a larger role in sharing and disseminating the systems and processes that missions have developed for dealing with the above-mentioned issues, especially where those systems and processes represent examples of best practice that could benefit other missions. The Department of Political Affairs recently prepared standard operating procedures for the management and support of special political missions by its headquarters staff, and OIOS commends those guidelines as an important first step to ensuring greater dissemination, sharing and use of information in mission planning and management within the Department. However, OIOS also notes that more work must be done to better coordinate special political mission management within the Department. For example, greater use should be made of the collective experience and expertise of its staff in developing minimum approaches to planning and managing the missions.

33. Enhanced coordination and cooperation between staff of the Department of Political Affairs at Headquarters and special political mission field staff in mission strategic planning would also help to reduce the potential for differences in interpretation of mission mandates between Headquarters and the field. Mission staff report obtaining limited input from the Department in guiding the activities and strategies of the individual missions. Recent examples were given, however, where the Department has been more closely involved in working with the mission to revise mission strategies. For example, the Department of Political Affairs desk officer responsible for one special political mission recently travelled to the mission and participated in a strategic planning exercise for the mission, including assisting in the development of mission strategic workplans. Mission staff viewed such involvement as constructive and helpful. OIOS suggests that the Department continue to be more closely involved in ongoing mission planning through regular

contact and exchanges with each mission as a means of further enhancing the strategic direction of the missions and as a means of ensuring further coordination and cooperation between the missions and other United Nations actors. Better coordination and cooperation between the Department and other parts of the United Nations system in planning and coordinating the overall political, peacebuilding and conflict-prevention efforts of the United Nations is seen by stakeholders as critical to ensuring that special political missions are planned and deployed in a way that better aligns the priorities of the Organization with available resources and to areas within which the missions are able to make a difference. *The Department of Political Affairs commented that every effort is being made to improve interdepartmental cooperation and communication on the management of special political missions and that cooperation between the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs is excellent, with more regular meetings between the two departments at the working level and the development of draft guidelines governing their interaction.*

Mission budgets and structure

34. Although it is widely agreed that special political missions must be provided with adequate resources to perform their mandated functions, stakeholders also believe that further improvement is required in mission budgeting. Many point to the need for clearer budgets that better link mission resource requirements to mission activities and that better demonstrate how the mission's activities fit within the overall mandate. Mission staff also report that the results-based budgeting process recently instituted for most missions has been helpful in better linking the budget to the mission's intended outcomes. *The Department of Political Affairs commented that it provided strategic guidance to all special political missions prior to commencing the results-based budgeting process for 2007. However, the Department agreed that more could be done in that area. The Department also commented that it has to stress to senior managers of the missions that they must take more responsibility over the implementation of the mission's work and the production and implementation of results-based budgeting, and in controlling budget growth.*

35. In many missions, budget preparation and planning has improved over the last year, particularly as a result of the attention paid to the process by the Department of Field Support and the training and assistance that it provides to the mission. *The Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs commented that there has been close cooperation between the two departments in addressing budgetary processes and practices with respect to special political missions. The Department of Field Support noted that it reviews the staffing structures of all field missions to ensure that the individual needs of each mission are reflected in the mission budget and structure.* OIOS views attention to individual mission needs as important, especially since some stakeholders perceived that a template approach to staffing and resourcing had been taken in the past when preparing mission budgets and structures. *The Department of Field Support commented, however, that mission templates are used as a tool to guide the planning process but are not intended nor applied as a one-size-fits-all solution.* OIOS notes that many stakeholders agreed that there was a need to tailor each mission to the individual needs and circumstances of the situation, which requires not only improved strategic planning, but better cooperation and coordination between relevant Headquarters actors,

including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Safety and Security. The early involvement of other actors like the Department of Field Support in the mission planning process helps to ensure that mission budgets and structures are individually designed, aligning mission size, structures and skills to the financial and human resource needs of the mission. OIOS observes that the Department of Field Support has not been invited by the Department of Political Affairs to be involved at an early enough stage in the planning process for new missions, at the expense of better designed and tailored mission budgets and support.

Performance monitoring and reporting

36. OIOS notes that performance information contained in budget documents and programme performance reports does not facilitate easy assessment of particular special political missions, including how well they implemented their mandates and what impact they had in their areas of focus. The Secretary-General regularly submits reports to the Security Council on the work of most of the special political missions. Those reports generally contain information on the political, security and socio-economic situation within the region and, where relevant, on humanitarian and development activities. However, the reports do not regularly connect those conditions and mission activities to mission objectives. *The Department of Field Support commented that information on performance monitoring and reporting on special political missions is not required to be reflected in the Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council on those missions, and that that information is instead presented in the proposed programme budget.* However, OIOS notes that there is sometimes a need for more timely information through which performance of the special political missions can be assessed, especially given the usual short time frames of their mandates, which necessitate regular review of their performance.

37. Similarly, the performance framework contained in the programme budgets does not clearly connect the proposed activities of the special political mission to its overall mission mandate. The expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement provided in the programme budget are not always designed to allow easy assessment of the actual contribution that the mission, through its activities, has made or will make to meeting its mandate. For example, in the 2008-2009 proposed programme budget, a special political mission for which the overall objective was to "contribute to peace", listed "increased frequency of negotiation between parties" as an expected accomplishment in achieving its mandate. The indicator of achievement for this expected accomplishment was defined as "450 meetings". *The Department of Field Support commented that the results-based budgeting logical framework does not provide a narrative on cause and effect between indicators of achievement and expected accomplishments.* OIOS notes that without that further information, whether presented in on results-based budgeting reports or elsewhere, it remains difficult to assess whether the activities of the missions have in fact contributed to peace and conflict prevention.

38. OIOS considers that there is a need for improved information on mission performance. Stakeholders often commented that performance reporting on special political missions should be better tailored to the needs of respective users. Member States, staff of the Department of Political Affairs, mission leadership and others rely on performance data to better inform their decisions on budgets and staffing and on whether to deploy new missions or to extend the mandates of existing

missions. Improved and better tailored performance measurement, evaluation and reporting would allow for more informed assessments of the contributions that the missions make to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. OIOS notes that closer consultation between the Department and Member States would assist them to better define their performance information needs and to improve performance monitoring of and reporting on the missions.

D. Despite recent improvements, insufficient substantive and administrative support remains a key impediment to mission performance

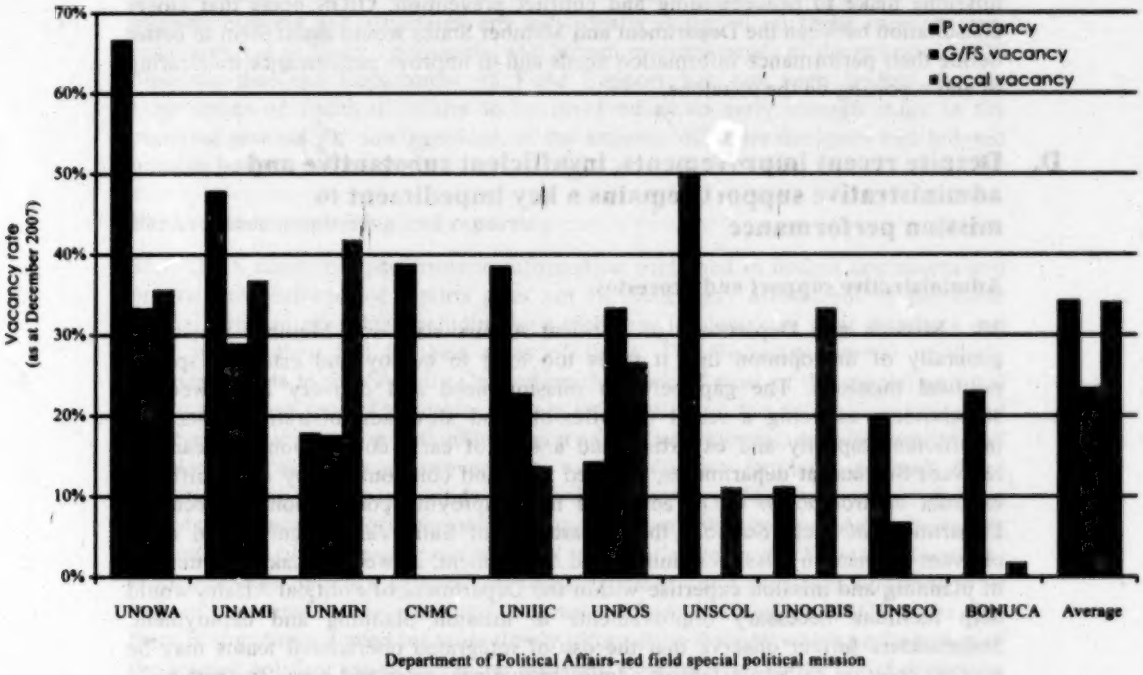
Administrative support and processes

39. Mission and Department of Political Affairs staff and Member States are generally of the opinion that it takes too long to deploy and establish special political missions. The gap between mission need and delivery is viewed by stakeholders as being a result of inflexible and slow administrative processes, insufficient capacity and expertise, and a lack of early cooperation between the relevant Secretariat departments, coupled with and compounded by often difficult external environments. OIOS considers that improving cooperation between the Department of Field Support, the Department of Safety and Security and other relevant partners in mission planning and deployment, as well as making better use of planning and mission expertise within the Department of Political Affairs would help facilitate necessary improvements in mission planning and deployment. Stakeholders further observe that the use of integrated operational teams may be another solution to help establish administrative processes and other systems early within the mission, and to ensure that recruitment needs are adequately met.[28]

40. Following mission commencement, insufficient administrative support to special political missions has at times hindered mission activities. Mission staff note that administrative support processes are not appropriately tailored to the needs of the missions, thus impeding mission performance. Of particular concern are recruitment processes that are not able to deliver staff with the appropriate skills within the required time frames. Recruitment of mission staff is reported to take, on average, between four and six months, and some key mission posts are reportedly left vacant, which in turn leaves the mission with critical shortages of staff, skills and resources. *The Department of Field Support commented that the established overall results-based budget vacancy rate is 20 per cent for start-up missions and 15 per cent for stable missions.* Total vacancy rates across all missions average 22 per cent, although as shown in figure IV, among missions led by the Department of Political Affairs average vacancy rates are higher, at 32 per cent. *The Department of Field Support commented that it is implementing a number of measures to expedite the selection process and reduce high vacancy rates. For example, missions have been given authority to implement automated selection at the mission level; they have been delegated authority to technically clear certain candidates; and succession planning capacity has been targeted for improvement.* Despite those steps, however, OIOS notes that slow recruitment processes were frequently identified by mission staff and other stakeholders as a key impediment to mission performance.

[28] In this context, integrated operational teams are composed of specialists who provide expert guidance to the planning and management of missions.

Figure IV
Vacancy rates in all field special political missions, as at December 2007

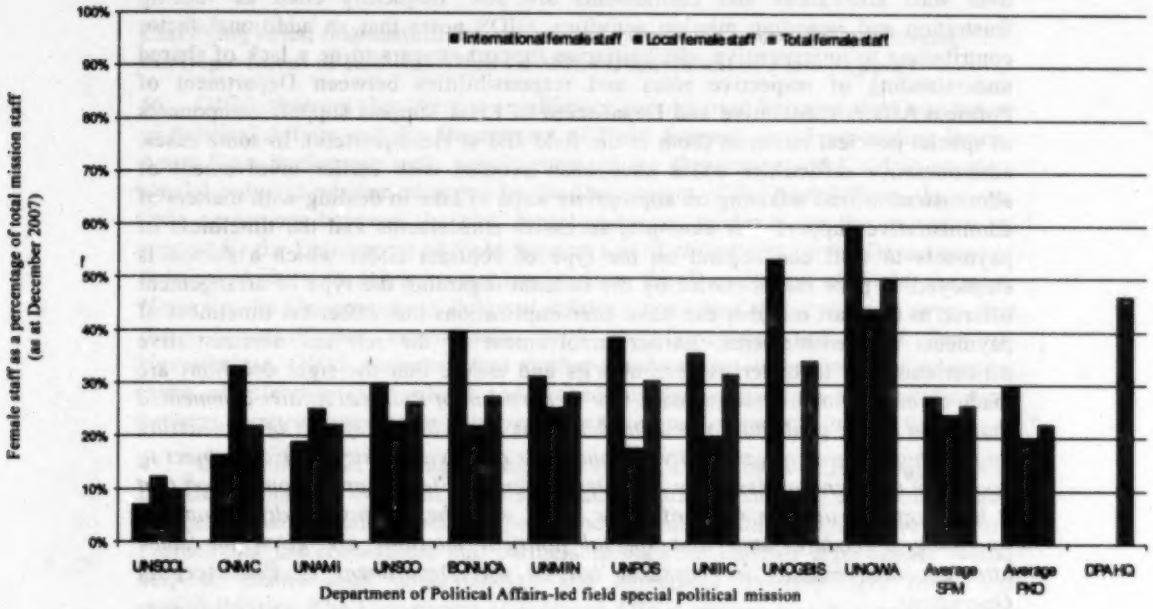


Source: OIOS (based on data provided by the Department of Field Support).
Notes: See annex I for list of abbreviations.
P=Professional; G=General Service; FS=Field Service.

41. Also of concern is the poor representation of women in special political missions. As figure V shows, on average, women comprise only 26 per cent of total staff in special political missions led by the Department of Political Affairs. That compares with an average of 23 per cent in peacekeeping operations and 47 per cent in the Department at Headquarters.[29] OIOS also notes that fewer locally engaged staff in the missions are likely to be women than internationally engaged staff. *The Department of Field Support commented that human resources action plans are being introduced in all field missions, effective 1 July 2008, to plan and monitor the performance of individual field missions. The Department of Field Support noted that the action plans will set realistic targets to reduce timelines in the selection process, decrease high vacancy and turnover rates and ensure that proper recruitment timelines are established. The action plans will also include measures aimed at increasing gender and geographic diversity within the missions. The human resources management reform proposals set out in the report of the Secretary-General, "Investing in people" (A/61/255), seek to address inadequacies in the conditions of service of staff serving in the field and, if adopted by the General Assembly, would contribute to the reduction of high vacancy and turnover rates.*

[29] For peacekeeping operations, the figure does not include the military component of the mission (where women comprise 1.9 per cent of total military staff).

Figure V
Women staff in field SPMs, as at December 2007



Source: OIOS (based on data provided by the Department of Field Support).
Notes: See annex I for list of abbreviations.
SPM=special political mission; PKO=peacekeeping operations; DPA HQ=Department of Political Affairs at United Nations Headquarters.

42. Another result of short-term planning horizons and limited mission mandates (see paragraphs 29 to 31) that perhaps contributes to high vacancy rates and gender imbalance is the engagement of mission staff on short-term appointments. Limited duration of appointments makes it difficult to attract the necessary human resource skills and expertise and also makes staff retention difficult. *The Department of Field Support commented that, pursuant to resolutions of the General Assembly, the 300 series appointment is to be used as the primary instrument for the recruitment of new mission staff. The compensation package for 300 series appointments is less than that offered under the 100 series contract.*[30] Staff and others note that formal systems for initial and ongoing staff development and training, necessary to ensure that mission staff can effectively perform their duties, are not sufficiently developed. In fact, 83 per cent of mission staff survey respondents believe that the amount of training they received was not sufficient. *The Department of Field Support commented that, to address training issues, it is working to compile an inventory of existing staff development activities and professional training and certification programmes, in order to identify and address gaps in the programmes offered.*

[30] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 30, addendum* (A/61/30/Add.1), chap. 3.

43. Stakeholders also describe other challenges with respect to obtaining sufficient support. Delays in payment of salaries and seemingly unnecessary complications over staff allowances and entitlements are also frequently cited as causing frustration and impeding mission activities. OIOS notes that an additional factor contributing to unresponsive administrative support appears to be a lack of shared understanding of respective roles and responsibilities between Department of Political Affairs substantive and Department of Field Support support components of special political missions (both in the field and at Headquarters). In some cases, administrative difficulties could have been avoided with earlier involvement of administrative staff advising on appropriate steps to take in dealing with matters of administrative support. For example, access to entitlements and the timeliness of payments to staff can depend on the type of contract under which a person is employed. A poor initial choice by the mission regarding the type of arrangement offered to the staff member can have later implications that affect the timeliness of payments and entitlements. Earlier involvement of the relevant administrative officer can help to better explore options and ensure that the right decisions are made on employment arrangements. *The Department of Political Affairs commented that much of the confusion over contract terms lies with the system of contracting and the high degree of variability of conditions of service, which is itself subject to review by the General Assembly. The Department of Field Support commented that it has begun to address some of those issues with the creation of draft standard operating procedures and that special political missions are given the same attention and support as missions led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.*

44. Mission staff report an apparent division between substantive political areas of the mission and administrative support areas, with neither area fully appreciating the needs and constraints of the other. The dual reporting lines of their Chief Administrative Officers (who report both to the Head of Mission and to the relevant part of the Department of Field Support in New York) are also viewed as contributing to the widely perceived lack of integration of the administrative and substantive parts of the mission. *The Department of Field Support commented that, consistent with the report of the Secretary-General that addressed the unity of command in the field, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or the Head of Mission serves as the ultimate authority at the mission level for operations and support and that the dual reporting line of Chief Administrative Officers has been eliminated, with Chief Administrative Officers no longer reporting to the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support (A/61/858, para. 112).* The arrangement was not yet seen to be fully implemented when fieldwork was conducted by OIOS.

45. OIOS considers that the confusion, frustration and perceived inconsistency in the nature and quality of support provided to special political missions may be avoided with more effective integration between all areas of the mission, so that all mission components work towards a common goal and purpose and have a shared understanding of mission direction. OIOS notes that it is necessary to view all aspects of the mission operations, including support, security and the substantive political and other areas of the mission, as partners in achieving the mission's objectives. While administrative support must be responsive to mission needs, such support must be provided in the context of an organizational framework that strives for transparency and accountability, which necessitates due regard for established processes and procedures. Greater clarity is required in the respective roles and

responsibilities among the various Department of Political Affairs and Department of Field Support mission components.

Clarifying roles, responsibilities and governance and accountability between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support

46. OIOS observes that there is insufficient coordination between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support on administrative issues. Apart from inadequate early involvement of the Department of Field Support in special political mission planning by the Department of Political Affairs, there was little agreement between the two departments on standards for the provision of support by the Department of Field Support and of obligations on the Department of Political Affairs in relying on support from the Department of Field Support. *However, the Department of Political Affairs commented that it did not agree that there is insufficient coordination with the Department of Field Support.* Nevertheless, OIOS considers that further improvement is needed. For example, terms of reference (see below) and procedures for cooperation and coordination between the two departments have yet to be developed or are still in draft form.

47. OIOS notes that clear agreement between the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs on administrative support expectations and obligations would help to address perceived problems with administrative support. Formalizing the cooperation and partnership between the two departments should help to ensure joint understanding and agreement on respective roles and responsibilities. The Department of Political Affairs advises that it is working with the Department of Field Support on terms of reference to govern their collaboration on field missions, and OIOS encourages further work to formalize arrangements between the two departments. *The Department of Field Support commented that it has created standard operating procedures that define the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the administration of staff members and include procedures on recruitment and selection.* OIOS notes that not all relevant staff interviewed had a clear understanding of the respective roles, responsibilities and expectations of the relevant United Nations actors providing administrative support to special political missions.

48. As noted earlier, there must be greater clarity on governance and oversight arrangements for administrative support to special political missions, with further exploration of the extent to which the mission head and the Department of Political Affairs have a role to play in assuming accountability and responsibility for the administrative operations of the missions. It is viewed as an anomaly that, given the extent to which mission success relies on the administrative support provided to missions, it is perceived by mission staff and others that mission heads and the Department of Political Affairs do not have control over, nor accountability for, all aspects of the administrative support that is provided. Improved cooperation and collaboration between the respective Headquarters actors (including the Department of Management) would help to foster a culture of partnership in the attainment of United Nations goals sought to be achieved through the use of special political missions. *The Department of Field Support commented that the human resources action plans to be implemented in all missions from July 2008 will place a particular emphasis on the authorities and responsibilities of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Heads of Mission in human resource*

management and staff selection. Programme managers will be held accountable for their performance in achieving the objectives contained in their action plans.

Political guidance and support

49. Mission staff view special political missions as also requiring further substantive support from Headquarters to allow the mission to better anticipate and respond to changes in the regional political environment relevant to their work. However, such improved substantive support requires a structure at Headquarters that allows sufficient time and expertise to be devoted to political issues. Many interviewees, both at Headquarters and within missions, observe that there are not enough senior management and Headquarters resources available to focus on important mission issues. In order for the Department of Political Affairs to play a stronger role in guiding the work and activities of missions (and also to take full advantage of the field presence that the missions provide), senior management of the Department and other staff require more contact with the missions and the resources to ensure that such contact continues. Again, the recent proposals to strengthen the political capability of the Department provide it with an opportunity that it should take for ensuring better support to special political missions.

50. Mission and Department of Political Affairs staff, as well as Member States, observe that the Department's desk officers do not have enough time to provide special political missions with political analysis and support, and instead are required to spend too much time focusing on administrative issues. Desk officers also hold that view and report that inadequate time is generally available to deal with substantive issues related to their mission. Desk officers also report that they are unable to spend sufficient time at the mission, which in turn affects their ability to adequately understand the mission needs and operating environment. None of the desk officers believed that the frequency of their travel to the mission was adequate for them to do their job effectively. A third of the desk officers had not travelled at all to their mission in the past 12 months, and only one had travelled more than once.

Knowledge management and capacity-building

51. Inadequate attention is paid to managing the accumulated knowledge and expertise of Department of Political Affairs and special political mission staff in peacebuilding and conflict prevention as well as in establishing, managing and operating the missions. Many aspects of mission operations depend upon the qualities and experience of the individual staff involved, who apply their experience and knowledge to further the work of their respective missions. However, there are few formal mechanisms by which this experience is captured and applied to other work within the Department or the United Nations. In many instances, OIOS found duplication in the development of approaches and processes that can be reduced or eliminated by improved sharing or transfer of acquired collective information and experience. For example, planning for new missions has primarily been undertaken by the desk officer within the Department of Political Affairs regional division, with few formal avenues for ensuring that the collective experience of earlier mission planning is considered.

52. As noted above, the development of better guidance to Department staff on management and support to special political missions is an important step. OIOS

notes that the Department is proposing establishing enhanced best practices and knowledge management capability. However, it must also formalize mechanisms for the capture and exchange of experience and knowledge on the management of special political missions.

V. Conclusion

53. Stakeholders generally believe that special political missions play an important role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, but it is difficult to demonstrate direct links between such perceptions and mission activities. A number of factors contribute to this, including the lack of a clear definition and vision for the role of special political missions in the peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts of the United Nations and insufficient coordination and cooperation in the work of the missions with other United Nations actors. There has been only limited monitoring, review and self-evaluation by the Department of Political Affairs of special political mission performance, with little assessment of the contribution that such missions make to peacebuilding and conflict prevention and whether mission activities are relevant to those goals. Also hindering the impact of special political missions are systems and processes for administrative and substantive support that are poorly suited to the work of the missions, with administrative support not sufficiently responsive and tailored to the needs of the missions and their unique circumstances. Strategic planning and mission deployment are also in need of improvement.

54. The four recommendations made by OIOS are aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of support to special political missions and enhancing the contribution that the missions make to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. However, OIOS also notes that the proposed restructuring of the Department of Political Affairs and the recent establishment of the Department of Field Support, provide additional opportunities for the Department of Political Affairs to make changes to the support and use of special political missions, changes that have the potential to make the missions a stronger and more integral part of the work of the United Nations.

VI. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Paragraphs 20 to 25

55. The Department of Political Affairs, along with other relevant United Nations Secretariat actors (including the Department of Field Support, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and other relevant United Nations actors), should develop clear guidelines that define special political missions, their role in the peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts of the United Nations and the respective responsibilities of relevant United Nations Secretariat departments with respect to leadership and support to the missions.

Recommendation 2

Paragraphs 26 to 31

56. The Department of Political Affairs should improve mission strategic planning by ensuring that a clear mission strategy is developed and documented for each special political mission. Making use of existing United Nations planning approaches, the mission strategy should describe: (a) the intended overall role and goals of the mission; (b) the expected activities of the mission and how those activities will contribute to the achievement of the mission mandate; (c) the expected time required to achieve the mandate; and (d) indicators or criteria that may be used in measuring mission progress and in determining whether the mission can be said to have accomplished its mandate. *The Department of Political Affairs noted that it should be clear that through the established results-based budgeting process, much of what is recommended already takes place.*

Recommendation 3

Paragraphs 39 to 48

57. The Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support should agree and prepare terms of reference or guidelines that formalize and improve cooperation and coordination in the planning and support of special political missions. The terms of reference or guidelines should clarify the respective roles, responsibilities and standards for interaction between the departments to ensure that mission resources and support are better tailored to mission circumstances and need. *The Department of Political Affairs noted that draft guidelines are already under preparation. The Department of Field Support noted that it has also developed a general menu of support services that it can offer to the Department of Political Affairs and Department of Political Affairs-led missions as means of clarifying roles and responsibilities and building shared expectations.*

Recommendation 4

Paragraphs 32 to 38 and 49 to 52

58. The Department of Political Affairs should develop appropriate mechanisms for overall Department of Political Affairs management, coordination and oversight of special political missions.

59. A first step could be the establishment of policies or processes within the Department of Political Affairs for more formalized coordination and knowledge-sharing in the planning and support of special political missions (including the regular participation of Headquarters staff in the development and review of mission workplans), as well as clarification of overall responsibility and accountability within the Department for mission performance and results. Departmental policies and procedures for management of special political missions should also include guidance on better monitoring and reporting of mission performance against benchmarks and on the use of performance information in guiding mission activities. *The Department of Political Affairs noted that the above-mentioned process is already under way.*

Inga-Britt **Ahlenius**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Annex I

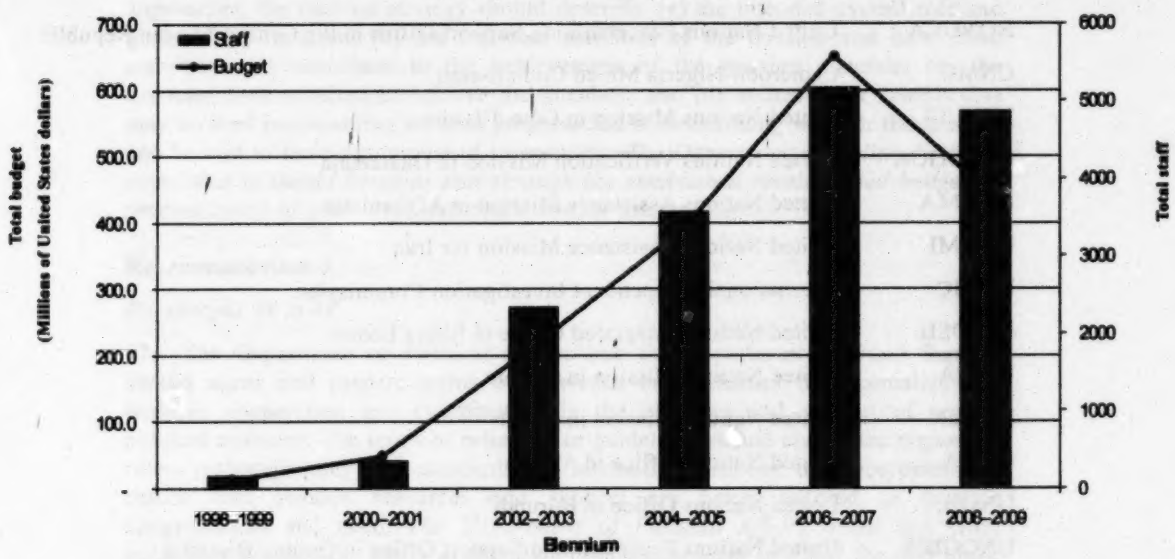
Abbreviations of field special political missions included in the report

BINUB	United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi
BONUCA	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic
CNMC	Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
MINUCI	United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire
MINUGUA	United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNIIIC	International Independent Investigation Commission
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
UNMA	United Nations Mission in Angola
UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
UNOA	United Nations Office in Angola
UNOB	United Nations Office in Burundi[a]
UNOGBIS	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNOL	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia
UNOSEK	Office of the Special Envoy for the future status process for Kosovo
UNOTIL	United Nations Office in Timor-Leste
UNOWA	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa
UNPOB	United Nations Political Office in Bougainville
UNPOS	United Nations Political Office for Somalia
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
UNSCO	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle-East Peace Process
UNSCOL	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
UNTOP	United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding

[a] Succeeded in 2004 by the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB), for which the mandate ended in 2007.

Annex II

Growth in budget and staffing of field special political missions over the last 10 years



Source: OIOS (based on data provided by the Department of Field Support).
Note: For 2008-2009, budgets have been approved only for 2008.